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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/22/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KNAR](#) [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [GM](#)  
SUBJECT: CHANCELLERY WEIGHS IN FAVORABLY ON SPEED OF  
RESTITUTION CLAIMS PROCESSING

REF: A. STATE 23500

[1](#)B. BERLIN 399

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Jeffrey Rathke for Reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) On April 17, Embassy Poloffs met with the Chancellery Budgetary Policy Chief Ludger Schlieff to discuss facilitating property restitution to Nazi-era victims (see reftels). Schlieff acknowledged that the Finance Ministry was not making adequate progress on the processing of restitution claims related to the Nazi-era (reftel A). He conveyed his appreciation for informing the Chancellery of this problem so that his office could take action.

[1](#)2. (C) Onno Hueckmann of the Foreign Office's Legal Section had already shared with Schlieff Ambassador Kennedy's letter which expresses concerns about planned staffing reductions in the office responsible for processing restitution claims, which would further slow the Finance Ministry's ability to process such claims. Schlieff said that he agrees with the spirit of Kennedy's letter and has already expressed to the Finance Ministry the Chancellery's interest that personnel reductions in the office related to restitutions do not take place. He said that he will continue to communicate with the Finance Ministry on this issue.

[1](#)3. (C) Schlieff said that he believes the problem is getting worse, since 5,000 new restitution claims are filed each year, but many fewer are resolved, thereby adding to the balance of 77,000 outstanding restitution claims which currently exist. He shares the USG's desire to successfully resolve all pending cases, since the German government pays 6% interest on unresolved cases for which it is liable. Schlieff is optimistic that the Finance Ministry's staff reductions will not take place, but cannot be certain.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The federal government's budget negotiations are ongoing; the window is still open to influence funding for the office responsible for processing restitution claims. The Finance Ministry will send a budget to Parliament in mid-June.  
TIMKEN JR